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Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY RABAT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5604

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 RABAT 2698

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DEPT. PASS AS DESIRED

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR MO SS SP
SUBJ: SPANISH SAHARA: KING HASSAN URGES US ROLE

1. SUMMARY: KING SUMMONED ME ALONG WITH FRENCH AMBASSADOR JUNE 5 FOR SAHARA PRESENTATION, WITH PRIM MIN, FON MIN, AND ROYAL CABINET DIRECTOR IN ATTENDANCE. KING ASKED US AND FRANCE TO HELP BRING ABOUT ORDERLY TRANSITION IN SAHARA. KING ALSO DISCUSSED RECENT SECRET CONTACTS WITH SPAIN AND REVEALED THAT ORDERS HAD BEEN ISSUED FOR MOROCCAN ARMY TO ENTER SAHARA IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING ANY SPANISH WITHDRAWAL. HE SAW RECENT F POLISARIO PROGRAM AS AGGRAVATING SITUATION, AND MAIN THREAT TO MOROCCO AS EMANATING FROM ALGERIA; END OF JULY COULD BE "HOUR OF DECISION." AT SAME TIME, KING STRESSED READINESS TO MEET ALGERIA HALF-WAY AND INDICATED A NEW WILLINGNESS TO CONSIDER FOUR-POWER DISCUSSIONS INCLUDING ALGERIA. WHILE MOROCCAN MILITARY CONTINGENCY PLANNING OBVIOUSLY WELL ADVANCED, KING'S FOCUS REMAINS ON POLITICAL SOLUTION AND HE IS TAKING STUDIOUSLY CALM APPROACH. NEW MOROCCAN WILLINGNESS TO CONSIDER MULTILATERAL CONTACTS AND APPARENT SPANISH SOFTENING ON MODALITIES AND OUTCOME OF SAHARA TRANSITION SEEM TO BE NEW POSITIVE ELEMENTS IN SITUATION. END SUMMARY.

2. KING CALLED ME TO PALACE ON SHORT NOTICE LATE JUNE 5 TO GIVE PRESENTATION ON SAHARA. ALSO IN ATTENDANCE WERE FRENCH AMBASSADOR RAIMOND, PRI MIN OSMAN, FON MIN
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LARAKI, AND CABINET DIRECTOR BENSOUDA. KING SAID HE HAD

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ASKED THE REPRESENTATIVES OF US AND FRANCE, TWO COUNTRIES WHICH HAD SUPPORTED MOROCCO IN UNGA VOTE LAST FALL AND WHICH HE CONSIDERED IN BEST POSITION TO BE HELPFUL, TO HEAR HIS VIEWS IN HOPES THEY WOULD INDEED BE OF ASSISTANCE. KING DID NOT HAVE FORMAL WRITTEN STATEMENT TO PASS US, BUT MID HE RELIED ON TWO AMBASSADORS TO CONVEY HIS VIEWS TO PRESIDENTS FORD AND GISCARD IN DISCREET AND RESTRICTED CHANNELS. (FOLLOWING ACCOUNT BASED ON COMPARISON OF NOTES WITH FRENCH AMBASSADOR).

3. AFTER A BRIEF REVIEW OF RECENT SAHARA DEVELOPMENTS, KING RELATED THAT HE HAD RECENTLY HAD HIS SECURITY CHIEF, COL. DLIMI, MEET IN GENEVA WITH SPANISH COUNTERPART, GENERAL AROZARENA. KING'S PURPOSE WAS TO ENCOURAGE ORDERLY TRANSITION IN SAHARA. AROZARENA, HE SAID, HAD STRESSED SPANISH DESIRE TO GET OUT OF SAHARA AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE. AROZARENA HAD ALSO COMMENTED THAT SPANIARDS HAD BEEN "FOOLED" BY THE ALGERIANS, AND WERE NOW IN VERY DIFFICULT SITUATION.

4. KING MENTIONED MOROCCAN SUGGESTION MADE TO SPANISH FON MIN CORTINA SOME TIME BACK THAT ONE WAY IN WHICH A TRANSITION MIGHT BE EFFECTED WOULD BE FOR SPANISH TROOPS TO LEAVE AND FOR "FRIENDLY GROUPS" TO TAKE OVER FROM THEM TO PROVIDE AN INTERMEDIATE STEP TO MOROCCAN ASSUMPTION OF CONTROL. SPANIARDS HAD, HOWEVER, SUBSEQUENTLY CLOSED SAHARAN-MOROCCAN BORDER, THEREBY, HE IMPLIED, DISCARDING THE SUGGESTION IN PRACTICE. RECENT "SUBTERFUGE" OF "26-POINT" F POLISARIO PROGRAM (WE ASSUME THIS REFERS TO 19-POINT PROGRAM REPORTED ALGIERS 1315) IN FACT GAVE HIM JUSTIFICATION, IF HE WANTED TO USE IT, FOR DIRECT INTERVENTION. IF ALGERIANS CALLED THEMSELVES "CONCERNED PARTY," MOROCCANS WERE NOW "KONSTERNATED PARTY," HE QUIPPED.

5. COL. DLIMI, COMMANDER OF SOUTHERN AREA, HAD TWO ORDERS IN HIS POCKET, KING CONTINUED, OF WHICH HE WANTED TO INFORM US. IF SPANISH LEFT, WITHIN HALF AN HOUR DLIMI WAS TO (A) MARCH INTO EL AYOUN REGION OF SAHARA AND (B) SEAL OFF FRONTIER BETWEEN SAHARA AND ALGERIA. KING EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE IN LIKELY SUCESS OF SUCH A MOVE, AS BOUMEDIENE WAS IN NO RPT NO POSITION TO

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INTERVENE DIRECTLY WITH MILITARY FORCES. (FRENCH AMBASSADOR'S UNDERSTANDING WAS THAT SPANIARDS HAD ALSO BEEN INFORMED BY DLIMI OF HIS TWO ORDERS.)

6. KING JUDGED THAT REST OF ARAB WORLD COULD NOT JUST STAND IDLY BY IF MOROCCO AND ALGERIA SHOULD GET INTO ARMED CONFLICT. HE ALSO FELT ARAB SUPPORTERS OF ALGERIA WOULD BE LIMITED, PERHAPS TO IRAQ AND SOUTH YEMEN. ALGERIANS

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WOULD HAVE NO LEGAL JUSTIFICATION FOR INTERVENTION, IN LIGHT OF THEIR CONSISTENT DENIAL OF ANY TERRITORIAL CLAIMS OF THEIR OWN. MOST OTHER ARABS WOULD TRY TO CALM THE SITUATION; LACK OF CENTRAL FIGURE WITH DEATH OF FAISAL, HOWEVER, WAS FACTOR LIMITING WXTENT MOROCCO WOULD BE ABLE TO RELY ON OTHER ARABS. ALGERIAN POLICY, WHILE SKILLFUL, KING ELABORATED, WAS THE BLUFF OF THE YEAR. MOROCCANS MIGHT COME UP AGAINST VARIOUS BANDS WITH MIXED BAG EQUIPMENT, BUT THESE COULD BE HANDLED. IF BANDS WERE TRUE SAHARANS, THEY WOULD BE TEMPORARILY CONFINED. IF MAURITANIANS, THEY WOULD BE SENT BACK TO MAURITANIA, AND IF ALGERIANS, TO ALGERIA.

7. AS FOR MAURITANIA, KING CONTINUED, HE DID NOT EXPECT ANY PROBLEM FROM THAT QUARTER IN VIEW OF COMPLETELY SHARED MOROCCAN-MAURITANIAN POINT OF VIEW AND POLICY. HE ALSO UNDERLINED HE WANTED NO CONFLICT AND WOULD HAVE NONE WITH SPAIN, AND THERE WAS FULL UNDERSTANDING ON THIS WITH MADRID. F POLISARIO'S DECLARED PROGRAM, HOWEVER, HAD SHARPENED SITUATION AND IF SPANISH TROOPS LEFT AT 8 O'CLOCK, MOROCCANS WOULD MARCH IN AT 8:15, HE ASSERTED.

8. KING ASKED RHETORICALLY WHAT EXPLANATION MIGHT BE FOR "MANEUVER AND COMEDY" BETWEEN SPANISH AND ALGERIANS. SPANISH, HE THOUGHT, MUST BE SURPRISED AND TAKEN OFF GUARD BY RECENT EVENTS. AS FAR AS ALGERIANS CONCERNED, SPANISH HAD GOTTEN TOO CLOSE TO THEM AND NOW FOUND IT DIFFICULT TO EXTRICATE THEMSELVES. AROZARENO HAD STATED TO DLIMI BELIEF THAT IT WOULD BE IN SPAIN'S INTEREST TO WORK WITH MOROCCO. SPANISH WERE FREQUENTLY POETS RATHER THAN REALISTS, HOWEVER, AND HAD CLEARLY BEEN CAUGHT SHORT, KING CONCLUDED. FURTHERMORE, AS KING HAD SAID CONCERNING GISCARD'S OFFER OF GOOD OFFICES WITH SPAIN, PROBLEM WAS NO LONGER BETWEN MOROCCO AND SPAIN ALONE.

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9. END OF JULY MIGHT MARK HOUR OF DECISION, KING PREDICTED. HE HOPED, HOWEVER, THAT REASON WOULD PREVAIL IN ALGERIA; BOUMEDIENE WAS NOT IN GOOD POSITION TO GET TOO FAR OUT OF LINE, AND MOROCCO WOULD MEET ALGERIANS HALF-WAY. IF ALGERIANS WANTED A DEAL ON THE FRONTIER OR SOMETHING SIMILAR, THAT COULD BE TALKED ABOUT. IF ALGERIANS INSISTED ON A FOUR-POWER MEETING (I.E., SPAIN, ALGERIA, MOROCCO AND MAURITANIA), "WHY NOT" -- PERHAPS ON AN AMBASSADORIAL LEVEL WITHOUT ANY COMMITMENTS BEFOREHAND, KING COMMENTED. IF THAT SATISFIED THE ALGERIANS, THERE WOULD BE NO HARM.

10. KING ADDED PARENTHETICALLY THAT HE HAD RECENTLY HAD UNUSUALLY FRIENDLY EXCHANGE OF LETTERS WITH FRANCO. KING HAD ASKED HOW FRANCE, WHO HAD ONCE LEFT NORTH AFRICA TO CREATE ORDER IN SPAIN, COULD NOW LEAVE DISORDER BEHIND IN TERRITORY FROM WHICH HE HAD STARTED OUT. FRANCO HAD BEEN VERY IMPRESSED WITH THIS ARGUMENT, AND HAD REPLIED IN MOVING TERMS.

11. TURNING TO FRENCH AMBASSADOR AND MYSELF, KING STATED THAT HE HAD UTMOST CONFIDENCE THAT IF OUR TWO COUNTRIES COULD HELP WITH SURMOUNTING OF CURRENT "BIRTH PANGS," SITUATION WOULD BE MUCH EASED. HE CITED RECENT ARTICLE IN SPANISH ABC ADVOCATING SPACU MAKE DEAL WITH MOROCCO, AND REITERATED FRIMLY THAT HE HAD NO DISPUTE WITH SPAIN AND THAT THERE WAS IN FACT NO POSS-IBILITY OF CONFLICT WITH THAT COUNTRY IN VIEW OF PRESENT SPANISH ATTITUDE. HE WANTED TO ASSURE US HE WAS NOT PLAYING RUSSIAN ROULETTE; HE KNEW EXACTLY WHAT HE WAS DOING; HE WAS TAKING
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CALCULATED RISK. WE COULD SEE FOR OURSELVES WHETHER HE WAS EXCITED OR CALM, HE SAID. MOROCCAN POLITICAL PARTIES, HE NOTED, HAD BEEN STIRRING UP A GOOD DEAL OF EXCITEMENT OVER THE SAHARA ISSUE, AND ISTIQLAL LEADER BOUCETTA HAD BEEN TALKING A LOT. KING COULD HAVE SAID TEN TIMES MORE, BUT KING AND OFFICIAL LEVELS WERE CALM, HE UNDERLINED.

12. KING THEN ASKED WHETHER WE HAD ANY QUESTIONS. THANKING HIM FOR HIS PRESENTATION, I ASKED WHY HE THOUGHT THAT

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MATTERS HAD BECOME SO URGENT, INASMUCH AS ICJ AND UN PROCESS SEEMED TO BE MOVING AHEAD ON SCHEDULE. KING REPLIED THIS WAS FAR FROM CLEAR, AND HIS IMPRESSION FROM AROZARENA WAS THAT SPANISH EXTREMELY EAGER TO LEAVE SAHARA. AROZARENA HAD STATED THAT SPAIN HAD MANY PROBLEMS, TRANSITION OF POWER WAS AT HAND, SUCH MOMENTS WERE ALWAYS DIFFICULT, AND SPANISH ARMY HAD TO PRESERVE ITS MORAL AND PHYSICAL INTEGRITY.

13. TURNING TO FOREIGN MINISTER, THE KING ASKED ABOUT LIKELY TIMING OF ICJ PROCEDURE, REFERRING TO IMPRESSION THAT ICJ COULD WIND UP AS SOON AS EARLY JULY. FOREIGN MINISTER REPLIED THAT ARGUMENTS BEFORE ICJ SET TO BEGIN JUNE 23; THEREFORE PROCEDURE SHOULD BE OVER BY END OF JULY AT LATEST, EVEN THOUGH COURT KNOWN FOR SLOW MOTION.

14. COMMENT: KING SEEMED AS CALM AS I HAVE SEEN HIM THROUGHOUT THIS SESSION, AT SAME TIME CONVEYING IMPRESSION OF FIRMNESS. HE WAS AT CONSIDERABLE PAINS TO STRESS HE WAS NOT TAKING ALARMIST APPROACH, ALTHOUGH HE SAW SITUATION AS SERIOUS.

15. WHILE MORROCAN CONTINGENCY PLANNING FOR A MILITARY MOVE INTO SAHARA IS OBVIOUSLY WELL ADVANCED, KING'S STRESS REMAINS ON POLITICAL SOLUTION. FURTHERMORE, THERE APPEAR TO BE POSITIVE NEW ELEMENTS IN SITUATION. FIRST, KING HAD OBVIOUSLY BEEN RETHINKING PREVIOUS MOROCCAN INSISTENCE ON NEED FOR BILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS WITH SPAIN AND HAS APPARENTLY COME AROUND TO RECOGNIZING THAT MULTILATERAL CONTACTS INCLUDING ALGERIA MIGHT BE NEEDED. SECOND, AS INDICATED MADRID 3889, GOS SEEMS TO BE SOFTENING ITS POSITION ON MODALITIES AND OUTCOME OF SAHARA TRANSITION. FRENCH

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AMBASSADOR TOLD ME HIS GOVERNMENT ALSO HAD REPORT TO THIS EFFECT ON BASIS OF RECENT EXCHANGE WITH SPANISH FON MIN CORTINA.

16. WHILE KING DID NOT GET INTO SPECIFICS OF WHAT US OR FRANCE MIGHT DO, THRUST OF HIS DEMARCHE, IN MY AS WELL AS FRENCH AMBASSADOR'S ASSESSMENT, AIMED AT INDUCING US AND FRANCE TO INTERVENE WITH SPAIN TO ASSURE THAT GOS REFRAINS FROM ABRUPT WITHDRAWAL FROM SAHARA, THEREBY PERMITTING TIME FOR ORDERLY TRANSITION IN THE TERRITORY. FRENCH AMBASSADOR SHARES VIEW THAT NEITHER FRANCE NOR US IN A POSITION TO DO MUCH WITH ALGERIA UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES.
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